

Frequently Asked Questions about Synthetic Cannabinoids/Spice

Q. What are synthetic cannabinoids?

A. Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that are sprayed onto dried plant material so it can be smoked. They may also be sold as liquids to be used in e-cigarettes and other devices. These products often go by the names K2, Spice, Black Mamba, Kush, Kronik and others. They are also marketed as herbal or liquid incense. Synthetic cannabinoids are often believed to be a safe alternative to marijuana, but they are not.

Q. Are synthetic cannabinoids legal?

A. Possession and sale of synthetic cannabinoids is illegal in Indiana under IC 35-48-4.

Q. What are the dangers of using synthetic cannabinoids?

A. Synthetic cannabinoids are often marketed as a relatively safe alternative to marijuana. However, they can cause harmful and unpredictable health effects, including severe illness and even death. Synthetic cannabinoids can cause hallucinations, seizures, breathing problems, heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, bleeding and others.

Q. Why are people bleeding? Are the synthetic cannabinoids we are seeing in Indiana laced with rat poison?

A. Several individuals who used synthetic cannabinoids experienced severe bleeding and have tested positive for a chemical often used in rat poison (brodifacoum). While synthetic cannabinoids in general are dangerous, the severe bleeding seen in these cases is consistent with someone who has been exposed to rat poison.

Q. Is there a specific type of synthetic cannabinoids being used in Indiana that is causing people to bleed?

A. Many different synthetic cannabinoids have been associated with bleeding. Some people use many different brands of products obtained from different locations. There are no standards for making, packaging, or selling synthetic cannabinoids, which means that even two packets of the same brand-named product may contain completely different chemicals.

Q. Where are people getting these synthetic cannabinoids?

A. Synthetic cannabinoids are found throughout Indiana and across the country in convenience stores, smoke shops, gas stations, individuals or online as incense or natural herbal products.

Q. What's being done to avoid future cases?

A. Synthetic cannabinoids are an unregulated product so there is no oversight of manufacturing or distribution. Additional cases continue to be reported to ISDH and we have issued alerts to make the public aware, but there's no way to know how many more cases there will be.

Q. What should people do if they use synthetic cannabinoids and get sick?

A. People who have used a synthetic cannabinoids and have severe bleeding should call 911 or have someone take them to a hospital emergency department immediately. People should not use synthetic cannabinoids.

Q. Have there been previous outbreaks associated with synthetic cannabinoids?

A. Across the country there have been outbreaks related to synthetic cannabinoids. However, this outbreak appears to be linked to a contaminant, which has not been reported before.

Q. Can people who have used synthetic cannabinoids donate blood and plasma?

A. No, people who are using synthetic cannabinoids should NOT donate blood or plasma.

Q. Where can I go for up to date information about this event?

A. Please visit our Indiana State Department of Health Website for updated information about case counts and resources: <https://www.in.gov/isdh/27788.htm>. Information will be updated weekly or more frequently, if needed.



Indiana State
Department of Health